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A
SERMON

Preach'd at the

FUNERAL

OF

Mr. BENJAMIN TOMKINS,

OF

ABINGDON,

Who departed this Life *May* the 1st, in
the 68th Year of his Age.

By PETER BELBIN. K

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SERMON

Preach'd at the

FUNERAL

OF

MR. BENJAMIN TOMKINS

OF

A BURYING

Who departed this life on the 28th of his Age



PETER BELLIN

LONDON

Printed by W. Woodcock, at the Press of the British Museum

TO THE
CHILDREN
Of the Deceased
Mr. Benjamin Tomkins,

The following
SERMON,

Is, with all possible Respect,
DEDICATED,

By their sincere Friend,

And very humble Servant,

PETER BELBIN.

TO THE
CHILDREN

Of the Deceased

Mr Benjamin Tomkins,

The following

SERMON



Is, with all possible Respect,

DEDICATED,

By their sincere Friend,

And very humble Servant,

PETER BEELIN.

REVEL. XIV. 13.

*And I heard a voice from heaven,
saying unto me, Write, Blessed
are the dead which die in the
Lord, from henceforth; yea,
saith the Spirit, that they may
rest from their labours; and their
works do follow them.*

THIS book was written by our Lord's beloved disciple, in the isle of Patmos, whither he had been banish'd by the Emperor Domitian, for his great zeal in propagating the Christian faith; and as he was the favourite disciple, who had the honour to lean on his Lord's bosom, in the days of his flesh, so he seems to have been peculiarly regarded by his glorious Master, after his ascension; not only in that he was miraculously rescued from the pains of martyrdom, survived the rest of the apostles, and, having arrived to a very advanced age, died in peace; but especially for that he was employ'd as the chosen instrument, to deliver this great prophesy,

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phesy, in which are contained not only many excellent instructions to the angels of the seven Asian churches, relating to their own conduct, and the government of those under their care, but the most remarkable events also that were in future times to attend the church, and the most signal judgments that should befall an ungodly world from that age, down to the second coming of Christ, and the consummation of all things.

THE whole is written in a very peculiar stile, with noble and uncommon expressions; for as the apostle sometimes denounces the judgments of God on the unbelieving and impenitent, in a most awful manner, so, in other places, he is most clear and copious in treating of the blessedness and glory of the saints. When he speaks of the dreadful torments of the wicked, his images are most lively, and cloathed with an emphatical terror; but when describing the mansions of bliss prepared for the righteous, the gates of paradise are open'd, as it were, to our view, and we take a delightful prospect of heaven.

MANY instances of its sacred sublimity might be given, were it necessary; but passing over this, I hasten to the consideration of my text, than which there is not a more noble passage in the whole Bible. In how solemn and majestic a manner is this most comfortable truth of the saints future glory and blessedness delivered, becoming the lips of him who made this revelation! With what a serious and affecting

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fecting dignity suited to impress the mind, and produce at once delight and reverence!

DEATH is shocking to nature; 'tis our terror and aversion, and, being consider'd as the offspring of sin, is undoubtedly a great evil; but our blessed Lord having, by his sufferings, abolished the power of sin and death, has, for all his obedient followers, changed the nature of death, and render'd that which was originally a curse, the greatest of blessings, and brought immortality and eternal life to light by the gospel.

Now 'twas necessary that his people should know this, that amidst the great dangers the church was then expos'd to, and the continual apprehensions of death the saints laboured under, from the cruel violence of a raging persecution, they might not be terrified, but, being born above those fears, might be even filled with pleasure in the prospect of that glory which should follow.

This doctrine, indeed, of the saints happiness after death, had been taught before, in many places of the Bible: But our Lord did not think that sufficient, since 'twas a point of so great importance, and which must needs have a mighty influence upon their comfort and joy, and the chearful discharge of their duty too; and therefore he was pleased further to confirm it by an audible voice from heaven.

WHEN on earth, he had comforted his disciples with these words: " Let not your
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heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto my self, that where I am, there ye may be also^a." But being now ascended to his cœlestial kingdom, instated in glory at the Father's right hand, and invested with all power, both in heaven and in earth, he would strengthen the faith and hope of his people, and revive their hearts by this gracious benediction: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

So that now we may look upon it as a matter of the greatest certainty, being assured of it by our Lord's own voice from heaven, that all who believe in him, and are obedient to his gospel, shall, when this life is ended, enter on a far better state, on an immortal life of glory, they shall be blessed and happy for ever.

AND this was commanded to be written, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord;" as 'twas a point of utmost consequence, both for the support of the church then, under all her troubles, and for the comfort of generations to come, that the righteous in all ages might have their hearts enlarged in the service of God, be made to set light, both by the vanities and troubles of this life, and

^a John xiv. 1, 2, 3.

not through fear of death, be subject to bondage, but have their thoughts reconciled to it, as an advantageous and happy change, and enabled to rejoice, in hope of the glory reserved in heaven for them.

IN discoursing from these words, the most natural method, I think, will be,

I. To consider the character of the persons here spoken of, those who die in the Lord.

II. WHAT is here said of them, that after death they are blessed.

III. To enquire wherein their blessedness consisteth, which is defined in the text.

1. BY a cessation from their labours.

2. IN reaping the fruit of their service and obedience to God.

I. I must consider the character of the persons here spoken of, those who die in the Lord; for you plainly see they are distinguish'd from the generality of mankind. The happiness here promised after death, doth not belong to all; neither reason nor the holy scriptures will suffer us to think thus. There is an eternal difference between good and evil; and, no doubt, the wise and righteous Governor of the world will see that this difference be maintained by a just retribution of rewards and punishments in a future state.

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DEATH is the period or conclusion of life, the close and winding up of all our conduct here upon earth, which, as 'tis all perfectly known to God, and we have the utmost assurance, both from the light of nature and divine revelation, that he will render to all men a just recompence for the things done in the body. Hence it follows, that death is either good or evil, happy or miserable, as 'tis the sequel of an ill or a well spent life; and 'tis therefore very plain, that those who, according to this phrase, die in the Lord, must have had a previous interest in their God and Redeemer; they must have been influenced by his grace, and been obedient to his authority; for whosoever has had no acquaintance with, nor interest in the Lord, whilst living, cannot reasonably hope to have any when dying. The man who lives a sinner will not be made a saint by death, nor be capable of entering into that happiness prepared for the righteous. Solomon tells us, that as the tree falleth, so it lieth; and, in another place, 'tis declared, that he that is unjust shall be unjust still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still. According to the life men lead, we may expect their death will be, and their everlasting state after death. A wicked man shall not die the death of the righteous, nor an impenitent sinner enter into the peace of the just: A graceless and unconverted person, who has been a stranger to true religion, and a rebel against the Lord all his life, shall
not

not be joined to him in his death, nor ever taste those joys which are at God's right hand.

THEREFORE those expressions of "sleeping in Jesus ^b," and of "falling asleep in Christ ^c," and in this and other places of dying in the Lord, must imply an union with, and interest in Christ before; such as that which St. Paul mentions, "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me ^d." And thus, in other places, true believers are said to "be in Christ, and to abide in him ^e;" and the apostle says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ^f;" which passages, if duly consider'd, will help us to the right understanding of this phrase in the text, Dying in the Lord.

THOSE whose great privilege and happiness it shall be to die in the Lord, must first be in Christ by faith, must have lived to God, in subjection to his government, and obedience to his law, having made religion their principal business and concern, and taken care, by a good and pious conversation, to be well prepared for death and eternity; and happy, most

^b 1 Thess. iv. 14.
^e John xv. 4, 7.

^c 1 Cor. xv. 18.
^f Rom. viii. 1.

^d Gal. ii. 20.

happy,

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happy, is the man, who, through the influence of divine grace, has been brought to know experimentally what 'tis to be in Christ: Such an one as hath been taught effectually to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, shall, when he departs hence, die in the Lord, and be blessed for ever.

THIS I take to be the genuine meaning of this phrase, "The dead who die in the Lord;" though I know some have understood it otherwise, and would have *εἰς Κυρίον*, which our translators have render'd, in the Lord, to signify the same with *propter Dominum vel Domini causâ*, for the Lord, or for his cause: And thus they contend that 'tis spoken only of the martyrs, who laid down their lives in vindication of the Christian doctrine, and sealed to the religion of Jesus with their blood; but the preposition *εἰς* has not usually this signification, and the passage must be somewhat forced to bear this sense.

AND besides, though we should grant that these words have relation principally to the martyrs, and the suffering state of the primitive church, yet there can be no manner of reason to confine it to them only. 'Tis far more agreeable to the analogy of faith, and the general language of scripture, that this passage be applied to all God's righteous people, They all live to the Lord, under the influence of his Spirit, in obedience to his law; the practice of his doctrine, and imitation of his life,

when here upon earth, they have made his glory their end, and his service their delight; and so whenever they are call'd hence, they shall die in the Lord, in the faith of Jesus, in the favour of their Creator and Redeemer, and are blessed for ever.

Now a person's being in Christ, which prepares for dying in the Lord, and for a happy glorious eternity, consists,

1. IN a true conversion to God; and,
2. IN a persevering course of piety to the end of his days.

1. IN a true conversion to God. This is absolutely necessary; ever since the fall and apostacy of Adam, the frame of human nature has been corrupt and depraved: As he, by his transgression, became a traitor and rebel against his Maker, falling from his primitive innocence and rectitude, so he deriv'd to all his posterity a degenerate nature; his guilt and pollution are communicated to all who descend from him. Hence 'tis the holy scripture represents all mankind as obnoxious to the condemning sentence of God's law; and affirms, that "by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners^s;" and that "there is none righteous; no, not one^h;" and that men are dead in trespasses and sinsⁱ; that they are shapen in iniquity, and conceiv'd in sin^k; and that being consider'd under the dis-

^s Rom. v. 19.
^k Psal. li. 5.

^h Rom. iii. 10.

ⁱ Eph. ii. 1.

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mal effects of the fall, we are all, by nature, the children of wrath ¹.

WE stand in a sad state of separation from God, expos'd to his just displeasure; and what, through our original and actual sin, the corruption of our nature, and enormities of our lives, we are rent off, and divided from him, who is the fountain of holiness and perfection, without God in this world, and utterly incapable of enjoying him in the next; for flesh and blood, human nature, in this degenerate state, in these sad circumstances of corruption and depravity, cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Now as it pleas'd God, of his abundant love, mercy, and compassion, towards the fallen race of Adam, to constitute his Son a Mediator, and send him into the world on the service of our souls; that by his compleat obedience to the law, and the merit of his satisfaction and sacrifice, all that should be brought to believe in him, to obey his gospel, and submit to his government, should be pardoned, justified, reconciled, and saved with an everlasting salvation, according to Christ's own words to Nicodemus; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ^m." So the Holy Spirit was appointed likewise to per-

¹ Eph. ii. 3.

^m John iii. 16.

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form his part in the glorious undertaking, to operate upon the minds of men, to convince them of their sin and misery, to enlighten them in the knowledge of Christ, to renew their wills, and persuade and enable them to embrace Jesus Christ, as offer'd in the gospel, to destroy the enmity which is naturally in our hearts against God, to remove our prejudices against religion and piety, to draw off our affections from the fallacious unsatisfying objects of this world, and bring us to set them upon divine things, and excite us to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, powerfully engaging the soul to God, and his service, and withal applying the saving benefits of Jesus Christ; thus bringing the happy convert into a state of grace and peace, and divine acceptance.

Now the Holy Spirit taking possession of the sinner, produces a blessed change in his state, his temper and disposition, and, in the future conduct of his life. Of a child of wrath, he becomes reconciled to God, is translated out of bondage to sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of Christ: Of vain and carnal, he is brought to be serious and holy, and, from being a worker of iniquity, is sweetly drawn over to the love and practice of virtue and religion: Thus he is admitted into the favour of God, adopted into his family, and, through the merits of the Lord Jesus, becomes entitled to all the privileges and promised blessings of the gospel.

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IN the work of conversion, there are these two principal parts, repentance and faith: Thus the apostle testified, both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ⁿ.

I. REPENTANCE. This is of great consequence and absolute necessity; so great that no person can ever be in a state of grace and reconciliation with God, who has not been brought truly to repent of his sins.

SIN is the high wall of separation between God and man, which must be pull'd down and destroy'd, before ever there can be peace and union restor'd. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, nor will he have any fellowship with the workers of iniquity, who walk in darkness; since therefore we are all sinners before God, and he may justly charge us with innumerable transgressions, for which should he summon us to his tribunal, he might there most righteously condemn every one of us: Ought we not to humble our selves before him, to confess our guilt and crimes, and, in the most lowly manner, intreat the forgiveness of heaven?

HAVE we not, like impious rebels, been in open and daring hostility against God? Have we not, by our sins, oppos'd his righteous authority and government? And surely then

ⁿ Acts xx. 21,

we must lay down our weapons, desist from our rebellion, and depart from our sins, as ever we would hope to obtain forgiveness; without this, we can never expect to have a pardon; for it would not be consistent with God's wisdom and righteous government to receive a sinner into favour, without being brought to repentance; nor is the remission of sin ever promised us in the Bible, but in this way.

AND this is one part of conversion. The Holy Spirit brings the sinner to a sight and sense of his iniquity, his danger and misery, and so fills him with self-abhorrence, with ingenuous shame and grief. Reflecting upon his natural corruption and depravity, together with all his past actual offences against so pure, so holy, so good a God, he is most heartily grieved for his transgressions, blames and condemns himself, and resolves, that if God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, will shew him mercy, and grant him the pardon of his iniquities, he will, for the future, depart from every evil way, and devote himself to the service of his Maker and Redeemer.

Now as this is a happy change to the poor sinner himself, so 'tis likewise most acceptable to God, who is always pleas'd when a soul returns to him, and thereby escapes everlasting destruction. He will own the work of his Spirit upon the heart of a true penitent, and, through the merits of his glorious Son, who-
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soever thus applies to him for mercy, shall most certainly obtain it. Hence, says the Psalmist, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise °."

AND, doubtless, whosoever desires to be at peace with God, and enjoy an interest in his favour, must see the necessity of breaking off his sins by repentance, and be truly brought to do so. On such God has promised to have mercy, that he will blot out as a cloud their sins, and as a thick cloud all their transgressions; and that, though their sins were as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; though they were red like crimson, they shall be as wool ^p.

AND on account of its Author, the Holy Spirit, and its happy effects and consequences to the penitent himself, and its acceptableness to God, St. Paul calls it a godly sorrow, that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of ^q.

Now this is one principal branch of true conversion to God, and of absolute necessity to prepare us for a comfortable departure hence, so that we may die in the Lord. And,

2. FAITH in the Lord Jesus, is of equal necessity to these happy purposes: Thus the apostle taught, not only the need of repentance towards God, but of faith also toward our

° Psal. li. 17.

^p Isai. i. 18.

^q 2 Cor. vii. 10.

Lord Jesus Christ. This must commix with and always accompany a true repentance ; and there can be no conversion to God, no union with, and interest in Christ, and consequently no such thing as a comfortable death without a lively and powerful faith in Jesus, the Redeemer. This is of the essence of conversion, and the necessity thereof is frequently insisted on, not only by the apostles, but Christ himself. The promise of eternal life is confin'd to those who believe ^r ; and by grace ye are saved, says the apostle, through faith ^r.

By that true faith which is of the operation of God, a poor sinner looks to the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour, and trusts in his sacrifice as the great atonement for sin, receives him as held forth in the gospel, as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, desiring to be instructed by the Word and Spirit of Christ, to be cleans'd from all his sins in the purifying fountain of the Redeemer's blood, and to yield, for the future, an entire subjection to his government and authority.

He views the blessed Jesus as one furnish'd with all proper qualifications to render him a compleat Saviour, being able to save to the uttermost all that shall come to the Father by him ; the man of God's right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself, on whom he has laid the help of our souls ; and accordingly the penitent believer, convinced of Christ's

^r John iii. 18.

^r Eph. ii. 8.

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excellencies, the necessity of being interested in him; and his abilities to save, to justify, and bring to glory all that belong to him; accepts and embraces him as his Saviour, trusting his precious soul, and all his most valuable concerns in the hands of Jesus.

Now when a person, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is enabled to believe in Christ, to receive him by faith, and join interests with him, in holy dependance upon his merits, covenant dedication to his service, and hearty subjection to his authority; such an one, in the language of the Bible, is said to be in Christ, to be implanted and ingrafted into him, to have fellowship and communion with the Father and with the Son; and, as such a pious soul is justified, through his Redeemer's righteousness and atonement; so he lives the Christian and divine life, through the communications of his grace, and his sanctification shall be gradually compleated by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him.

AND there being such a gracious union between Christ and his saints, he is sometimes represented as residing in them: Hence, says the apostle, Christ in you, the hope of glory^t; and Christ is said to dwell in their hearts by faith^v; and they, on the other hand, are said to be in him as branches in the vine^w: They are stiled, the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones^x: He dwelleth in them

^t Col. i. 27. ^v Eph. iii. 17. ^w John xv. 5. ^x Eph. v. 30.

by his sanctifying Spirit, and they live upon him by faith, as their Head of grace and influence. "Hence, says the apostle, your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." But then,

2. A person's being in Christ, which prepares for dying in the Lord, and a happy glorious eternity, consists likewise in a persevering course of piety to the end of his days.

FOR as a believer receives Christ at first by faith, so, by a life of holiness and obedience, he afterwards grows up into him, becomes conformable to, and gains a resemblance of his blessed Lord and Saviour. Such as are true penitents, sound believers, and real converts, who, by the abounding mercy of God, through his Son, have obtained the pardon of all their sins, have likewise surrendered themselves to their Maker's service; they account themselves obliged to live in his fear, to pursue his glory, and delight in his service; they are enter'd into covenant with the Lord, the vows of God are upon them, and they desire to serve and praise, to honour and obey him, all their days.

BEING redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and regenerated by his Spirit, they determine, that being made free from sin, they will, for the future, be the servants of

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God, that they may have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

THEY acknowledge themselves obliged to study the honour of their God and Redeemer, not to live in the indulgence of any known sin, but to labour after purity of heart, and holiness of life, yielding, as far as in them lies, an universal obedience to all God's commands; and though, whilst in this imperfect state, their love to God, and zeal for his service, meet with many an impediment, and while so many temptations and allurements surround them, they cannot be wholly free from sin, yet 'tis the object of their hatred; they wish for deliverance, and hope, e'er long, to obtain a compleat victory over it.

'Tis their habitual care and endeavour to abstain from every appearance of evil; and herein do they exercise themselves daily to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men.

THEY have set the Lord always before them, walking as in his presence with holy awe and reverence; in his law do they meditate, endeavouring to keep his statutes and judgments diligently, and have respect unto all his commandments.

As they have enter'd into covenant with God, and devoted themselves to the most High, with humble gratitude, for the benefits of creation, redemption, and providence, knowing that they derive all their mercies, and their very being, from him, who must therefore
have

have an undoubted interest in them, and a just right to their homage, their love and service; so they are resolved never to mingle with the workers of iniquity, never to cast off the fear, nor forsake the service of God; their heart is fixed trusting in God, and they have firmly resolved, that, thro' grace strengthening them, they will conscientiously serve the Lord, while life and breath shall last.

THEY have a noble zeal and concern for God's honour; they are every one ready to imitate the behaviour, and pronounce the language of good Joshua, when he declared thus, in the presence of the tribes of Isreal; "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

THEY consider that religion is a thing of solemn importance; not to be trifled with; for 'twill have an influence upon the welfare of their souls to all eternity; therefore they resolve to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, knowing that he who has called them is faithful.

'Tis their endeavour to persevere in the work and service of God, and so to run in the Christian race, as that they may obtain the incorruptible crown of glory: Like St. Paul, they resolve to labour after perfection, and to press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, whilst they heartily join with him in his devout wish, that they may win Christ, and be found in him.

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AND whilst in the present world, they consider themselves, as all the servants of God in past ages have done, to be but in the circumstances of pilgrims and strangers; they look on this as a sojourning state, where they have no lasting portion, no permanent inheritance. Their great treasure, their everlasting rest, is in another region, therefore they have their hearts in heaven; and though God should have bless'd them in the course of his providence with many enjoyments of this life, they look far above all these things, and have learnt to treat them with pious indifference; so by faith Abraham sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country, because he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God ².

THUS they run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, and are labouring with constant diligence to enter into that rest, which remaineth for the people of God. And having thus made the Lord their refuge, chose him as their portion, and devoted themselves to his service, conforming their lives, as near as human imperfections will permit, to the pure and perfect law of God; so they may, with the utmost reason, rejoice in him, as the strength of their hearts, and be confident of his unfailing love and gracious acceptance.

² Heb. xi. 9, 10.

THESE are the generation that shall see God, and enter into his holy habitation; he beholds them as his own children, with an eye of love and a fatherly care; in all their circumstances he regards them in mercy, and his blessing is perpetually on their heads; their sins are all pardon'd; God beholds them as perfect and compleat in his Son; he'll guide, direct, and bless them, while in this world, and cause all the dispensations of his providence to conspire for their good; and when they come to die, death shall do them no manner of hurt, but approach them with a mild and favourable aspect, not as an executioner of wrath, but as a messenger from their heavenly father, to conduct them home to himself: Thus shall they fall asleep in Christ; thus shall they die in the Lord, as persons interested in, and belonging to Jesus the Redeemer, concerning whom, we may pronounce, in the comfortable language of my text, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, &c." This was the

II. Thing I propos'd to consider, what is in the text said of such as die in the Lord; God himself, by a voice from heaven, has pronounced them blessed.

'Tis one great purpose of the gospel, to inform men of, and lead them on to a blessedness beyond the grave, to direct them in the way of life, and prepare them for the kingdom of heaven. Thus here those who die in the Lord are stiled blessed.

THEY

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THEY were happy persons before, being delivered from the dominion of sin, guided by the Holy Spirit, interested in Christ, and reconciled to God the Father ; they enjoy'd the love and favour of heaven, were under a divine blessing and protection, had escaped the pollution of the world, were visited with the light of God's countenance, comforted with the promises, and had tasted the inexpressible sweetness and pleasure of religion ; upon all which accounts they might very well be denominated blessed ; " for happy is that people, whose God is the Lord ^a ".

BUT the happiness of their life is passed over in silence, for the sake of mentioning the far greater happiness of their death ; there the stress is laid, there the emphasis is placed ; a living saint is happy, but a departed one much more so. The dead who die in the Lord, are far more blessed than ever they were when living.

HERE indeed they were the children of God, dear to him, and precious in his sight ; they were begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven ; but as every one had much rather have an inheritance, or any treasure in possession, than only the bare reversion of it, so 'tis beyond dispute that the felicity of a saint, when

^a Psal. cxliv. 13.

departed this life, vastly exceeds whatever 'twas before, as much as heaven is preferable to earth.

THE happiness of good men after death, may be strongly inferred from the light of nature; but 'tis clear, plain, and certain, from holy scripture.

MANY of the ancient Heathen, unassisted by any revelation from God, yet had a strong persuasion and noble views of the happiness of good men after this life.

THE soul being spiritual and immaterial, is not subject to corruption and death, like the body; and 'tis therefore highly probable, and has always been strongly believed, by the wisest and best men, in all ages, that when the soul of a good and virtuous man makes her departure from this body, she enters into a state of rest and happiness.

I have not room to produce the several arguments that are usually urged, with great strength and justice, in proof of this important truth.

BUT however, for our satisfaction, who are blessed with that inestimable treasure, the holy scriptures, the matter may be drawn into a narrow compass; there the proof is clear, plain, and certain, and leaves no place for dubious conjectures.

There we learn that death is only the passage out of this life into another; in which, all the unequal distributions of providence will be set right, and whatsoever inconveni-

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cies good men have suffered in the present state, shall be abundantly compensated with everlasting honour and felicity in a future.

As the true convert and serious believer, were, by Christ, reconciled to the Father, advanced to the honour of being his sons, and stood high in his favour in this world, 'tis plain, he must have reserv'd some glorious happiness for them in the next; having been dear to him in life, he will not cast them off at last; "but precious in the sight of the Lord, shall be the death of his saints ^b": "And when the righteous come to die, they have hope in their death ^c". And, in consideration of being released from so many cares and troubles as they endured in this world, and being admitted into a plenitude of joy in the next, their end is better than their beginning, and the day of their death is far better to them than the day of their birth ^d.

THOUGH the dust, the frail body, return to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it ^e. And a good man, in his departing moments, can, by faith, look up to heaven, and say, in the words of his Redeemer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ^f."

WHEN Christ, our Lord, left this world, he went up with attendant angels, and in the presence of a great multitude to heaven, where he ever lives, as his peoples head, and inter-

^b Psal. cxvi. 13.

^c Prov. xiv. 32.

^d Ecclef. vii. 1.

^e Chap. xii. 7.

^f Luke xxiii. 46.

cessor,

cessor, by the ministry of his word, and influence of his grace, turning sinners to God, and gathering converts into his church on earth; whom, as he guides and sanctifies in their life, so at their death, by his great power, he raises the souls of his departed saints to himself; and for which we can produce his own promise: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be ^g." "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ^h."

THE holy Bible abounds with passages which amount to the strongest proof imaginable of this truth, that those who die in the Lord are blessed; that there is a reward for the righteous; that the pure in heart, and holy in life, shall see God, and dwell in his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore.

THEY were called by the gospel to the obtaining the glory of Jesus Christ; they have a treasure laid up in heaven, and are entitled to an inheritance with the saints in light; for which reason, they are exhorted to set their affections upon things above, and not on things below; and Christ instructs them not to fear, because 'tis their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom ⁱ. And St. Paul testifies, that "their light affliction in this life,

^g John xii. 26.

^h Chap. xvii. 24.

ⁱ Luke xii. 32.

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which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while they look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at those which are not seen and eternal ^k."

Now since the present world, and the life that now is, were never designed for the scene of our happiness, 'tis necessary that the saints should die, in order to their being compleatly blessed, as 'twas for the tribes of Israel to go over Jordan before they could possess the promised land. There is only this narrow passage to be gained, which may seem, to our timorous apprehensions, somewhat rough and difficult; but God will conduct his dear children in safety, his presence shall be with them, and though they must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, their God will be with them there, and they shall be so supported, that they need fear no evil.

DEATH shall remove the vail, and give them a transporting prospect of all their rich inheritance; nay, it shall do more, it shall open a door for them to enter in, and take possession of the heavenly paradise, whilst attendant angels shall kindly wait on them, to welcome the happy heirs of salvation into those delightful regions, and conduct them to their blissful seats.

I know there are some who think the happiness of good men will be defer'd till the re-

^k 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

furrection, and that they do not immediately at death enter into the promised glory; but, unless I am much mistaken, this opinion directly contradicts the plain scope of holy scripture.

I am not fond of meddling with controversies, or inveighing against other mens opinions; but this I may be allowed to say, that to me no point in the whole Bible seems more evident, than that mens eternal happiness or misery commences immediately at death, and is not adjourned to the resurrection.

AND if the contrary be an error, 'tis best to guard against it; for, after all that some have said concerning the innocence of speculative errors, a wise man would think it far more safe and eligible to be on the side of truth, especially where it lies so very plain, as, I think, it does in this case.

BESIDES, an error here, I doubt, will hardly be merely speculative; for it may possibly have a very unhappy influence on a man's practice.

I do not say but that the firm belief of the resurrection, and a retribution of rewards and punishments then, may and ought to be sufficient to deter men from vice, and excite them to virtue and religion; but any one, I should think, will easily see, that the firm persuasion of these rewards taking place immediately at death, must have a much stronger influence upon the hearts and lives of men; for by how much the nearer any person apprehends his

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danger to be, so much the more will he be alarmed, and solicitous of making his escape; for which very reason, we should not be hasty in embracing such an opinion, which can never do any good, but may possibly do a great deal of hurt, especially when the current of holy scripture runs so strong the contrary way.

Would not any one naturally infer, that men go either to heaven or hell, as soon as this life is ended, from our Lord's celebrated parable¹? Poor Lazarus, when he died, was convey'd, by angels, into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments. Now to be placed in Abraham's bosom, was a well-known phrase among the Jews, to signify being received into heaven: And thus our Lord himself speaks of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven^m. To which may be added Christ's answer on the cross to the prayer of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." To which he directly replies, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradiseⁿ."

AND does not St. Paul say, that "though to him to live was Christ, [would, probably, be for the service of his Lord, and the good of the church] yet to die was gain," [to die would be advantageous to himself^o?] Does he

¹ Luke xvi. 19.
^o Phil. i. 21.

^m Matt. viii. 11.

ⁿ Luke xxiii. 43.

not say, that in deliberating upon life and death, " he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which was far better ^p ; and " we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ^q ? And he says, that " whilst they were at home in the body, they were absent from the Lord; but when absent from the body, they should be present with the Lord ^r."

To which we may join the testimony of our text, which plainly delivers the same doctrine; for if the joy and felicity of the saints be put off till the resurrection, 'tis a great impropriety to mention, in so emphatical a manner, the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord.

AND besides, several very judicious expofitors have understood the original word ἀπαρτί, translated in the text [henceforth] to denote, that the felicity and blessedness of the departed saints, commences a puncto mortis, from the very instant of their death.

So that, I think, we may very safely conclude, that our beloved Christian friends, and all the dear people of God, who, having passed under the converting work of the Holy Spirit, persevered in the faith, and so died in the Lord, are not in a state of inglorious slumber and dull insensibility, where they can render

^p Phil. i. 23.

^q 2 Cor. v. 1.

^r Ver. 6.

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no service to their God, nor have any enjoyments of him; but, on the contrary, are advanced high above the pains and calamities of this life, to unutterable pleasures at God's right hand, and are enter'd into the possession of that immense glory, which infinitely surpasseth any honours that are known here upon earth.

AND well may the dead, who die in the Lord, be pronounced blessed, since they are gone to dwell with their Redeemer, who loved them, and gave his life a ransom for them, washed them from their sins in his precious blood, and made them kings and priests to God his Father, and before his departure from this world, declared, that he was going to heaven, to prepare mansions for his saints; whom therefore, when they are called off the stage of this life, he, according to his promise, receives into the kingdom prepared for them, that they may dwell with himself, reap the fruit of his undertakings, and possess that rich, that ample inheritance he purchased for them with his blood.

THEY must be blessed, in that they have finished their sojourning state here on earth, in which the patriarchs and Old Testament saints, the noble army of Christian martyrs and confessors, and all God's faithful servants in every age, together with their glorious Lord himself, accounted themselves but strangers and foreigners, and are got home to their Father's house, and that better country they had been seeking after.

HERE,

HERE, though they had the prerogative of being the Sons of God, were heirs of his kingdom, joint heirs with Christ, yet they appeared like their Saviour himself, but in the form of servants, and in a state of obscurity; but being now arrived at the true Canaan, and their everlasting inheritance, they shine in all that lustre and dignity which becomes the children of God.

To them the promises are accomplished; the gospel covenant, in every article, fulfilled; and they have attained that exalted happiness, which the living saints, here on earth, are yet in pursuit of.

As all their desires and appetites are nobly refined and sanctified, and raised above inferior corrupting objects, so they are gratified with the most agreeable sensations of true pleasure, and they possess a constant joy and satisfaction, and are happy to the full of their capacities.

AND 'tis impossible that any thing should be wanting to their felicity, since they are admitted into the presence and enjoyment of God, with whom is the fountain of life, and whose favour creates the heaven and happiness of angels.

THEY must enjoy perpetual ease, rest and serenity, since no enemy can approach them there. Nothing can possibly create them any perturbation, occasion them any fear, or administer any the least pain and trouble. They dwell in a blessed region of light and love,

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love, peace and security, even in the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which needeth neither the sun nor the moon to shine in it, being constantly irradiated with the glory of God, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

THERE the saints have the best company, and most noble employments ; holiness is their very nature and element, and like a well tuned instrument, all their powers and faculties sweetly correspond with the delightful work of heaven ; and how compleatly blessed must they be, whose breasts ever glow with love to God ; who are always expedite to serve and praise him, and over whom he rejoiceth and resteth in his love towards them ! This is blessedness ! This is glory indeed !

AND though their happiness may not be so perfect as to be incapable of addition, at that great period, when Christ shall make his illustrious appearance, and raise the bodies of the saints incorruptible and immortal ; yet this we may depend on, they have already so high a degree of refined joy and pleasure, that 'twould be a kind of injury even to wish their return to us but for one moment.

WE cannot indeed particularly define their happiness ; “ for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have enter'd into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ”. In this imperfect state we know but very little of heaven ; but that we

^f 1 Cor. ii. 9.

may not be totally ignorant of it, God has given us, in holy scripture, some such hints as are accommodated to our present circumstances and manner of thinking; so here, in the text, 'tis thus described, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them". This is the

III. And last thing I have to consider: The blessedness of those who die in the Lord is defined,

1. By a cessation from their labours.

2. By reaping the fruit of their service.

(1.) By a cessation from their labours, i. e. either from their services and duties, or their toils and difficulties; the former it cannot be; for the duties of religion and service of God, are never to be esteemed a burden; no, they are the delight of every pious soul; and besides, the services of the saints, tho' in better company, a happier world, and a more exalted manner than at present, will run through a glorious eternity; it must therefore be understood of the latter, the toils and difficulties of human life; from these death gives them an everlasting rest.

Now, though this was a great privilege and happy release to the primitive Christians, who, like a feeble flock, endangered by the fury of rapacious wolves, were exposed to the malice and violence of their Jewish and Heathen persecutors, were fined, imprisoned, worried in the amphitheatre, and brought to death by

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executions of the most terrible and exquisite torment, and to many of God's faithful servants in later ages, who may be said to have ascended to heaven, like Elijah, in a chariot of fire ; though it may be very properly mentioned as a part of their happiness, that when once released from their pain and trouble, their grievances, calamities, and hardships, by death ; they are then raised above the reach of their enemies, and none can injure them any more ; though before, the adversaries of God and his people, hunted them as a partridge upon the mountains, and they could take no rest here upon earth ; yet death having given them a kind discharge from all their vexations, their bodies sleep in the quiet grave, and their souls enjoy the rest of heaven, where they are no more afraid of evil, nor hear the voice of the oppressor.

YET we need not confine it to those who have felt the pains of martyrdom, or any kind of ill usage from men, but may take it as a general description of that happy release the saints gain by death, from all the toils, afflictions and hardships of this mortal state.

Is not man [the whole human race] born to trouble ? Are not toils, labours and difficulties, imposed on us all by a necessity of nature ; and no person in the world has ever yet found the art of escaping them ? Hence this life has been, by some, very aptly compared to a boisterous ocean, and death to a quiet haven.

We

We are frequently deceived with an outward appearance, and are ready to imagine, that honour and riches must needs render men happy; but this does, by no means, hold true: Pain and sickness, trouble and anxiety, find an easy passage to the rich and great; and were we able to make an exact calculation, they would be found to have, at least, an equal share of these, with the meanest of the people.

NEITHER do the gifts of the mind, knowledge and wisdom, nor the superior endowments of grace and holiness, vertue and religion, in the least, secure a man from the stroke of adversity; in this respect, as the wise man says, "No man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before them; all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked *".

THERE is this difference indeed in God's intention; a sinner is chastened with the rod of God's just displeasure, as a punishment for his iniquities; but a saint in love and mercy, for the exercise of his grace, the trial of his faith, and encrease of his patience, meekness and humility; for every son whom the Lord loveth he rebuketh and chasteneth.

But yet both the wicked and the righteous endure the same calamities, and drink out of the same cup of affliction. 'Twas the saying of several wise men among the ancients; "Man

* Eccles. ix. 1, 2.

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is born to suffer" ; and we have the same sentiment, with very little difference of words, in holy scripture : " Man is born to trouble as the sparks flie upward " : And, " Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble * " .

HAVE we not the example and suffrage of all God's servants for this, whose names shine with distinguish'd lustre, in holy scripture ? Did not Jacob declare, that as his days were few, so they were evil too ? And how many pathetic complaints have we from patient Job, and David, the man after God's own heart ? Did not the wise Solomon pronounce life to be full of labour and sorrow, and all human things, vanity and vexation of spirit ? How does Jeremiah mourn for the misery of Jerusalem, and the iniquities of his people !

YEA, and even our blessed Saviour himself, in how mean a manner did he make his entrance on the stage of this world ! He was persecuted in his infancy, hated and slandered all his life, accustomed to immoderate watchings, painful journies, and penurious circumstances, and at last cruelly buffeted, mocked, spit on, scourged and crucified ; so that it was remarked of him, that he had been seen to weep, but never to laugh : And the scriptures declare him to have been a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and most truly has it been said, God has had but one

^u Job v. 7. ^{*} Chap. xiv. 1.

Son without sin, but none without sufferings.

AND have we not often known this to be the case of many, whom we had the utmost reason to conclude dear and precious in the sight of God? Have we not frequently seen them drink deep of the cup of affliction, humbled low with painful exercises, and mourning in the anguish and bitterness of their souls?

HAVE we not heard the cries and groans of our beloved friends? Have we not seen their agonies under acute pains, or some violent distempers? Have we not stood by them with aching hearts, and even trembled to see the king of terrors making his advances upon them, whilst we could lend them no better assistance than sympathizing drops, and help only to water their pillow with our tears!

AND may we not add to this the trouble and affliction that often rises up in the soul of a good man, either from the consideration of his natural depravity, his remains of sin, his frequent coldness and indifference in religion, the faults and errors himself is conscious of, though perhaps unknown to any one else; the unsuitableness of his heart and frame to the mercies he has received, his departure in many instances from the divine rule and perfect law of God, and his unprofitableness under the gospel and ordinances of Christ?

WITH which may be number'd, as another cause of trouble, the buffetings and temptations

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tions of the devil, the doubts, fears, and other spiritual exercises, which good men are acquainted with, all which together, as they administer a great deal of uneasiness in life, and make this world but an incommodious habitation, so they are removed effectually and for ever by death. Then the mourning faints shall have their tears dried, the captives be unbound, the sons and daughters of affliction shall be at ease, and the weary and heavy laden shall find an everlasting rest.

WITH them the doubtful conflict is ended, their warfare is accomplish'd, their difficult probation is over, they have finish'd their course; their laborious resistance to sin, Satan, and the world, is concluded, a period put to all the struggles of nature and grace, the un-sanctified against the sanctified part, and they are come off with success and victory over all their enemies; blessed, therefore, are the dead who die in the Lord.

THEY are deliver'd from every instance of tribulation, and removed from every cause of sorrow; they have done with all complaints; and could you now be admitted into their society, you would no more hear them, as formerly, sigh and lament, nor see them look pensive and dejected; but the high praises of God are in their mouths, and an air of celestial and angelical pleasure shines in every countenance: They have gained the rest prepared for God's people, and are enter'd into the joy of their Lord, and are beautified
with

with the crown of righteousness, and array'd with the garments of salvation.

2. THEIR blessedness is defined by reaping the fruit of their services; their works do follow them, i. e. they go to receive their reward, which, I think, is the most obvious sense of the phrase.

By their works, is meant their zeal for the honour and glory of God, their love to his name and worship, his word and ordinances, his churches and ministers, whom many a believer has loved with so true an affection, that he could say, like those mentioned, "I prefer Jerusalem to my chief joy."

By their works, we are to understand also their sincere, though imperfect, obedience to God's commands, all their holy duties, together with acts of charity and mercy, their devotion and piety towards God himself, their justice, truth and beneficence towards men; every thing in their life and conduct, that has been good and virtuous, and praise-worthy, that has recommended religion and adorned Christianity. All these shall have their proper reward, which we may safely believe, without running into the popish and unscriptural doctrine of merit.

Good works cannot deserve for us the crown of glory; they cannot purchase our admission into heaven. The holy scriptures mention no other way of justification, acceptance with

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God, and obtaining eternal glory, but by Jesus Christ the righteous.

SOME have remark'd on this passage, that 'tis said their good works follow them; not go before them, as though 'twere thus express'd on purpose, to preclude and anticipate any pretence of merit in them. Castalio has very well render'd it, "*Sua eos comitantur opera,*" their works accompany them, their good works go with them, though in the rear, and at humble distance, not proudly claiming an entrance for them into heaven, but following after with lowly consciousness of human frailty and imperfection, suitable to our Lord's instruction; so likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, "*We are unprofitable servants* ^a."

WHICH is much the same sentiment with what several orthodox divines have usually thus express'd: "*The works men now do are seed sown for eternity; that is, their duties and services are not lost or forgotten, but shall go with or follow them to heaven, to be taken notice of by a gracious and bountiful God: Thus says the Psalmist, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart* ^a."

THIS phrase may be supposed to imply the following things.

(1.) THEIR good works shall be had in remembrance before God, as a testimony of

^a Luke xvii. 10.

^a Psal. xcvi. 11.

their faith and sincerity; and, to prove the truth of their grace; to evidence that they were influenced by the Spirit of Christ, and so brought forth the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God. Thus the prophet Malachi says, that "a book of remembrance was written before the Lord for them that fear'd him, and thought upon his name ^b."

(2.) THEY themselves shall have in heaven a grateful and pleasing remembrance of their past conduct, how they chose the way of truth and righteousness, enter'd into covenant with God, serv'd, honour'd, and obey'd their Maker; chose, through the assistance of divine grace, to walk in that straight and narrow path, which leadeth to life; while multitudes ventur'd on in the broad way of sensual pleasure, carnal delights, soul-ruining vanity, and irreligion. The answer of a good conscience, is, at present, a great pleasure; the greatest, perhaps, men know on earth, next to the views of having their sins pardon'd, and enjoying the favour of God, thro' Jesus Christ. Solomon says, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself," i. e. by peaceful reflections ^c: And St. Paul, with a great deal of pleasure and triumph, "This is our crown and rejoicing, even the testimony of a good conscience ^d." And 'tis not at all inconsistent, to suppose that a delightful remembrance of a religious and

^b Mal. iii. 16.

^c Prov. xiv. 14.

^d 2 Cor. i. 12.

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well spent life, may rise up in the breast of a departed saint, when got to heaven.

(3.) IT may be understood of that reward, which, of grace, God will bestow on his people in the other world; doth not the Psalmist say, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward^c;" not only a present pleasure, but a future recompence. And St. Paul says, "Be not deceiv'd; God is not mocked: for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not^f." And again, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name^g:" And Christ enumerates in that celebrated parable^h, all the works of charity and mercy his people had perform'd; for which he praises and rewards them, though they, at the same time, modestly decline any such pretensions, and seem to have forgotten those good actions.

^c Psal. xix. 9, 10, 11. .
vi. 10.

^h Matt. xxv.

^f Gal. vi. 7, 8. 9.

^g Heb.

So that the sum of the matter seems to be this : Though the saints are justified, saved, and glorified, merely on the foot of Christ and his merits, yet God may take some particular notice of their love to his name and cause, their duties and services, and recompense them with some additional honour, not of debt, but of grace.

BUT, however, this is most certain : When the sincere servants of God depart this life of labour, duty, and obedience, they shall enter into the rest and happiness of heaven, and into the presence and enjoyment of that pure and perfect being, whom without holiness no man shall ever see.

LET this therefore encourage and animate us in our Christian course ; let us be up and doing, and quit our selves like men ; let us well improve our precious time and the gospel-grace we enjoy, since we most certainly know that to have loved, served, and honoured God, to have been truly pious and religious here upon earth, will be followed with an unspeakable joy and pleasure, a mighty glory and happiness in heaven.

AND let us all live to God in the diligent assiduous exercise of every Christian grace and virtue, then while we live we shall enjoy the favour and blessing of heaven ; and, when we are dead, this passage of scripture may be fitly applied to us, " Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," &c.

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I now come to draw some inferences from the whole. And,

1. Is there an unspeakable happiness and glory reserved for good men in a future state? May it be pronounced of them after death, that they are blessed? Doth their best portion lie in another region, to be possess'd and enjoy'd in a life to come? This should instruct us not to set our affections immoderately on any thing in this uncertain transitory life? Did we wisely consider that there is no such thing as perfect happiness in this world, how much would this abate our inordinate esteem of its painted vanities, and excite us to a noble diligence in pursuit of that full joy, that refined treasure, and infinite blessedness, which lie beyond death and the grave?

O, how egregious the mistake! how monstrous the abuse to human nature, when the noble soul of man is bowed down to unworthy objects, his views confined to the present life, and his behaviour such, as though the supreme happiness consisted either in the pomp and riches of the world, its sports and diversions, or in brutal vicious pleasures! What a shame and disgrace is this to the dignity of reasonable beings! what an affront to God's authority, contempt of true blessedness, and the only real felicity!

SHOULD we not rather look through time into eternity, and pursue our eternal welfare? Should we not set our affections upon things above, and look to the glorious prize proposed in the gospel, and, as he that striveth for the mastery,

maſtery, is temperate in all things, keep our ſelves from being either overcharged with the cares of this world, or intoxicated with its pleaſures, that ſo, with a holy vigour, and commendable diligence, we may run, with patience, the race that is ſet before us; and lay hold, in due time, of the incorruptible crown.

2. **THOUGH** the ſtate of future happineſs be promiſed to thoſe who die in the Lord, and ſo the delightful hope of it may well cheer and comfort the believing heart of a good man: Yet remember this; the wicked can lay no manner of claim to it; for the wiſdom, juſtice, and holineſs of God, and the immutable difference between good and evil, ſtand as an eternal bar to prevent a wicked man from ever entring into heaven; ſo that when ſuch an one dies, even charity her ſelf, which hopeth and beareth all things, cannot reaſonably ſay of him, He's bleſſed: No, for as certainly as God will render glory, honour, and a happy immortality to every one that doth good; ſo we may depend on it, as an infallible truth, that he'll pour indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh on every ſoul that doth evil.

LET this reach the conſcience; let this touch the hearts of the ungodly, and ſhew them the need of a ſpeedy departure from ſin, and a thorough reformation of life, leſt death and hell ſeize upon them unawares!

3. **SINCE** thoſe who die in the Lord are ſaid to be bleſſed; which, as I have ſhewed
you,

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you, supposes a true work of conversion, and so a previous interest in the merits of Christ, and the favour of God ; should not this lead us every one, to a strict and serious enquiry, Whether, through the grace of God, we have had our sinful nature changed and sanctified ? have been brought truly to believe in the Lord Jesus, who is the only Saviour of lost sinners, the only Mediator between God and man, and heartily to repent of all our sins and transgressions ? Has the Spirit of Christ operated on our hearts, and turned us to the Lord our God, and applied to us the saving benefits and merits of a blessed Redeemer ? Without this we cannot be in a safe state ; for if any man be in Christ Jesus, he must be a new creature, a gracious person, and a true convert ; and whosoever has passed under the Holy Spirit's work, and so is become regenerate, is no more a child of wrath, no longer subject to the curse of the law, but in a most safe and happy condition, may meditate on eternity without surprize, and need not be afraid of death.

4. SINCE, after death, the saints are blessed, and enter into the enjoyment of perfect felicity and everlasting rest, this shews us, that a good man has no reason to be solicitous about a long life ; for suppose him to be in the very best and easiest condition, the circumstances of human life will ever admit of, yet his continuance here is but a delay of that exalted bliss, and refined pleasure, that noble and glorious

ous state which death would lead him into.

AND if so, as he ought not to be over solicitous about long life, so 'twould be very unreasonable for him to be afraid of death, and unwilling to depart hence, when a rich inheritance is prepared for him, and a loving Redeemer waits to receive him.

5. WHEREAS the true and everlasting happiness of man lies in a future state; this gives us a right notion of the present life and the condition of men in this world: Should we not consider our selves as persons on a journey, in a changing uncertain state? We have nothing here we can call our own, nothing we can carry hence with us, in a few years, a few months, or even perhaps a few days, we may be required, by the mighty Sovereign of the world, to quit this stage of life. Let us therefore keep our end in view, and look towards eternity; let us live as creatures ought, who are shortly to leave this world, and all things here, and to enter on another, but an everlasting state; be it therefore our care to lay up treasure in heaven, and make all possible preparation for our comfort and well being in the life to come.

Is it not a most preposterous thing, when men disquiet themselves in vain, when they exert themselves in eager pursuit of this world's goods, where their abode is so very short and uncertain; but take little or no care to secure their happiness in the everlasting world?

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6. IF there will be so wide a difference between the state of a dead sinner, and that of a departed saint, let us seriously weigh it, and every one consult his own safety: Choose for your selves that better part which shall never be taken away; be sure to mind the great business of religion, and so live, that God may be your friend. A thoughtless inconsiderate life will never carry men to heaven, much less a profane and vicious one; strive therefore to enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way that leadeth to everlasting life: This is your great concern, this your true interest.

7. SINCE those who die in the Lord are blessed, in resting from their labours, and for that their works do follow them: This affords a use of comfort to the afflicted Christian, that there remaineth a rest for the people of God: Let patience therefore have its perfect work, and labour after entire resignation to the divine will; the trying, suffering season will soon be ended, and that of everlasting peace and rest shortly commence.

AND let it be a mighty encouragement to all God's people, to lay out themselves to the utmost, in doing good; let them be diligent and faithful in the improvement of their talents, and unwearied in the work and service of the Lord, since they are assured their works shall follow them; and through Christ, God the Father will accept and reward them.

8. If the dead who die in the Lord, are blessed; if they ascend to God and Christ, to saints and angels, and are admitted into all the sublime enjoyments of heaven, if they rest from all their labours, the toils, difficulties, calamities, evils, and dangers which we are exposed to in this mortal state, and their works of charity, mercy, and piety, follow them, to testify their grace and sincerity before God, and to be richly rewarded, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence learn, that the death of such a friend or relation, one in these happy circumstances, should be rather a matter of pleasing reflection and sweet comfort to us, than any cause of excessive sorrow.

By these awful providences, indeed, we ought to be affected, so as to be rendered more serious and considerate, more holy and religious; but not to be immoderately dejected.

Why should our souls be cast down? Why should they be disquieted within us, concerning those who sleep in Jesus, and are gone to the enjoyment of their Lord?

When death rends from us our beloved friends and relations, it may, in several respects, be a loss to us, encompassed as we are with human frailties, and the weaknesses of flesh and blood; we may want their company, we may stand in need of their advice, and sorely miss their kind assistance in our affairs, and the benefit of their good conversation; and our hearts may swell with trouble at the

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sad separation : But this we may be sure of, that if they belong'd to God and Christ, if religion was the business of their lives, if they chose the better part for their souls, and sought the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof ; the loss is only on our side, but none at all to them ; no, 'tis their exceeding gain : They are raised above the troubles that encompass us, and have left behind them all the vanity and vexation of this life.

THEY no more need us, nor any thing on this earth ; they enjoy God, and possess all happiness in him ; their joy is full, their pleasures overflow.

We are ready, upon these melancholy occasions, to look only on the dark side, to meditate on our own loss, to employ our thoughts on the pale breathless corpse, and the ruins of the grave ; and when we reflect, that a person, who was near to us in the bonds of nature, and dear and beloved, perhaps, upon several other accounts ; one who was but lately a pleasant companion, and an agreeable friend to help us along through the toilsome maze of life, is now snatch'd from us by the relentless hand of death, and lodged in the silent tomb, amidst worms and rottenness, our hearts rise, and our sorrows flow at the mournful providence.

BUT 'twould be far better if we gave our thoughts another turn, if we considered the friend or relation yet living, yet existing in the better part ; and that the soul, all that was
truly

truly noble and excellent, yet remains, yet survives; and is ascended to the Father of spirits, and entered into the glories of heaven; and would not return to this world again for all its best treasures and utmost enjoyments. Could we but rise now on the wings of faith, and pious meditation, and give a look within the gates of the New Jerusalem, and there see the departed saints with their crowns of glory on their heads, and their long white robes, those emblems of dominion and purity, and the palms of victory in their hands; could we but hear them, amidst a consort of angels, chaunting forth their divine songs and hallelujahs to him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb: O how should we rejoice in their exaltation, and wish and long to be with them!

IF the saints in heaven have any knowledge of our affairs here upon earth, they may be supposed to look down even on crowns and sceptres, with disdain; and whilst we are grieving for their departure hence, they pity us, amidst the sins and frailties, the dangers and sorrows that continually encompass us, in this mortal state; they wish we had safely passed this ocean of trouble, and were got into that secure haven of everlasting rest and peace, where they are enter'd.

AND as the felicity of the souls of the departed saints should alleviate our sorrows for the death of such as die in the Lord, so we may derive other arguments of consolation

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from the wondrous beauty and splendor which shall adorn their bodies at the resurrection. Hear the advice of St. Paul in this case. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him ⁱ". And, "when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall his saints also appear with him in glory ^k". Then shall the bodies of our pious friends, which we now mournfully commit to the dust, be ransomed from the power of the grave, and raised in glory, honour, and incorruption: "And when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall the noble army of raised and glorified saints triumph over their enemy death and the grave, in the elevated language of scripture, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Death is swallow'd up in victory. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ^l".

I have now done with my subject; but before I conclude, have a few things to say concerning the deceased. And though, as most men live, 'tis not in our power to say much good of them when they are dead; and 'tis doubtless, far beneath the sacredness of our

ⁱ 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

^k Coloss. iij. 4.

^l 1 Cor. xv. 54,

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office and employment to paint off an ill character, and bestow that praise upon a bad man, which ought to be the reward only of vertue, goodness and piety ; for which reason the ministers of the gospel, should generally be very cautious and sparing on this head.

YET since the holy scriptures say, " That the memory of the just shall be blessed, and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance " ; I may certainly be allow'd to mention several things to the just commendation of this excellent and worthy man, especially since the virtues and good actions of the dead, may, I hope, excite the living to imitation.

AND though to represent the deceased gentleman, in a true light, requires an abler hand ; yet this give me leave to say ; He was a person of strict justice and probity, so that amidst the great multiplicity of affairs, which, for many years he ran through ; herein he exercised himself daily, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men.

As a friend and neighbour, he was ready to all good offices ; and never better pleased than when 'twas in his power, by good advice (which he was very capable of giving) or otherwise, to lend any assistance to such as needed it, in which he always behaved with the utmost candor and sincerity.

HE was a man of great steadiness and inflexible resolution in whatever he knew to be
true

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true and right, and a most religious observer of his word.

OF great prudence and oeconomy in the management of all his affairs; disorder and confusion were unknown in his house; and none could live in a better disposed family, or serve a better master.

OF great temperance and exact sobriety (as became a wise and good man) in all places and companies. And as he was a person of excellent parts, and possess'd a fund of good sense, so his conversation, almost to the last, in those intervals, when he enjoy'd some respite from his sharp pains, was agreeable, instructive, profitable; for he knew how to discourse well on any subject.

No one could be more a stranger to disguise and insincerity, or a greater lover of integrity and uprightness; so that he feared speaking the truth to none; and abhorred, to the utmost, all approaches towards a mean compliance with any thing contrary to his honour and his principles.

A good subject, and a true friend to the present government, and firm on the side of liberty.

He filled up also, excellently well, the character of a good husband, and a good father: With what kindness and love did he behave towards his children, yet so as to preserve an exact decorum, and maintain that regard which was due to him as a parent! No one could have exceeded him in the care of their educa-

education, as knowing 'twas his duty to train up his children in the way wherein they should walk, and to be solicitous not only for their temporal welfare, but the happiness of their immortal souls: And (which was a great point indeed) he took care to add weight to his instructions by his own pattern, and was an example of good to all about him.

BUT though all these things are highly commendable, and worthy of general imitation, yet there are matters of a far nobler nature that redound to his praise; for as he had a just regard to the performance of his duty among men, so, in which may we all follow his example! He had on his mind powerful and abiding impressions of his duty towards God.

AND though, in the course of providence, he was bless'd with a plentiful portion of this world's goods, yet prosperity had not made him vain; nor had he learnt, as too many do, to forget God, and be above religion.

No, his heart was influenced by the grace of God: He had experienced what 'tis to be in Christ, and had a very judicious taste of divine things.

HAVING been convinced of the evil of sin, and the great need he stood in of the Lord Jesus Christ, to redeem and sanctify, and bring him to glory, he strove to shew forth his love and gratitude to his God and Redeemer, by heartily espousing the cause of Christ and religion; for which no man, I think, could have a greater zeal and concern.

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HE submitted to the ordinances of the gospel, and behaved as an honourable member of the church of Christ, giving good proof that he was a true disciple of Jesus, by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God.

HE had a cordial love and respect for all serious ministers of the gospel, whom he loved and honoured for their works sake. He was always well pleased with their company; and shewed them the utmost marks of kindness: But, most of all, was he delighted, when he could hear that the pleasure of the Lord prosper'd in their hands, and that their labours were blessed to the conversion and edification of souls.

NOR did he let his concern for religion, and zeal for God's honour, and the good of precious souls, be gather'd only from his words and expressions, but gave many substantial proofs of it, by generous contributions to the support of poor ministers and small congregations; so that, I am well assured, many good Christians do greatly lament his death, and will ever love his memory; for that by his kind assistance the preaching of the gospel was in good measure maintain'd among them.

AND how great zeal and diligence did he discover in this affair, when, some years since, he engaged with several other worthy and pious gentlemen, in concerting measures, and making provision for the future answering these good purposes! How much was owing

in that considerable affair to his great penetration, unwearied diligence, and personal generosity!

AND this he did, not out of a party spirit, but a just concern for the worship of God in that way, which he sincerely believed to be according to the holy scriptures; for, in matters of religion, he was govern'd (as a true Christian ought to be) not by humour, but conscience.

Now this was a charity to the souls of men, and is, doubtless, of the highest and noblest kind: But, that he might not be defective in any part of this eminent Christian grace, 'tis very well known, to the inhabitants of this place where he lived, that he often distributed of his plenty among those that were in want, and refreshed the bowels of the hungry; so that the blessing of the poor and needy came upon him.

AND, besides these publick acts of his charity, I am very well assured he has relieved a great many in a more private way. He would not willingly have let any honest person, in trouble and distress, have went away without his kind assistance; for he greatly delighted in doing good, and shew'd, that he had well consider'd St. Paul's instruction to Timothy; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good, that they be rich in good works,

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ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life ^a."

THUS as, on the one hand, he was not like many, who are so tenacious of riches, and so strongly in love with money, that they never do any good in life, and will part with nothing till they can keep it no longer; so, on the other hand, he took care that his good works of mercy and charity should not end together with his life. He wisely and piously resolv'd, that when he could no longer minister to the necessities of the poor with his own hands, there should be a standing provision made for them, that so his charity might survive him, and death should not put a stop to his doing good.

THUS, tho' he understood the doctrine of the gospel better, than to think he could merit by these, or any other good works, yet he well knew it was his duty to honour the Lord with his substance.

HE not only observed the publick performance of religious duties, but his family was a religious family, and his house a house of prayer. Reading the holy scriptures, and solemnly addressing God Almighty, were the exercises that begun and closed every day; and that in the most decent and orderly manner at stated hours, when all other affairs were made to give way to that sacred employment. Thus he took care of the souls of all about him, and,

^a 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

like good Joshua, had resolv'd, that he and his house would serve the Lord.

AND as he conscientiously feared and served God, in the better and more vigorous season of life, so, as age and infirmities grew upon him, he enjoy'd the supports of religion, and the consolations of Christ, which are not small.

THUS he was enabled to possess his soul in patience, and under the most exquisite pains; (for he had frequent and very violent fits of the stone.) He discover'd abundance of submission to the will of God, bearing his afflictions with great and uncommon resignation, far from discovering any marks of impatience, or ever murmuring at the hand of God; no, he had learnt to acquiesce in the sovereign disposal of heaven; and was ready, like Job, to say, under all his afflictions, "Blessed be the name of the Lord °." Indeed, he practis'd in a high degree what the apostle recommends: "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing °."

AND having led such a life in the strict and regular practice of all the duties of our holy religion, and behaved in all vertuous and unblameable conversation, we may, with very good reason, conclude him to have been a person interested in the favour of God, one habitually prepared for death; who as, like Enoch, he walk'd with God, so now we may safely say the Lord hath taken him, and apply to him the words of the text, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

° Job i. 21.

° James i. 4.

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Now, though the removal of such an excellent person be a great loss to you his children, and other relations, yet you ought not to sorrow as those who are without hope, since you have the utmost cause to be well satisfied concerning his eternal state, that he has exchanged earth for heaven, and is admitted into all the glories of the upper and blessed world.

AND give me leave just to add to you, the children of the deceased gentleman, that as you are the branches and descendants of a pious family, who have been train'd up in the knowledge of divine things, had the principles of early piety instilled into your tender minds, and have enjoy'd the benefit and influence of such an example, both God and men expect it of you, that you make a suitable proficiency in grace and holiness, in every thing excellent and praise-worthy.

Now may the Almighty grant us all his blessing, and help every one of us to lay to heart, and seriously consider, what has been offer'd on this solemn occasion! May our minds be seriously affected with the thoughts of our own mortality and approaching change! May we all be seeking after an interest in Jesus Christ, and take care so to form our lives, as that whenever we die, God may receive us to himself, and we may be blessed for ever.

Now to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory, honour, and praise, for evermore. Amen.

